KEATS HOUSE,
HAMPSTEAD, N.W.3.

20 Dec.r 1910.

And so my old friend Tom Richards thinks it is possible that I can forget him. Tom, you are very nearly the oldest friend I have — next to my Parents, I owe no one so heavy a debt of gratitude as I do yourself — you, by your precept as well as by your example laid the foundation of all my love of literature. To you I am indebted for the most heaven-like communions of my life — I was as wild as a young Bull, as mischievous, as wayward, and as obstinate — you know it — this is no flourish of the pen — a cheap way of acknowledging and discharging an obligation. — But I know it too, and if I have not confessed as much as this to yourself I have to others — and I hope the time may never arrive that I should even be tempted to deny it.

I shall not repeat the old excuse about putting off the evil day of writing, till the act of writing becomes almost as disgraceful as the neglect. The fact is, I have thought of you many times, but never with the intention of writing to you.

And for the future, let me beg of you whenever you think of me, never to associate with my person the idea that I can forget you, or ever feel cold in my attachment — "There is no such thing." —

My Sister has informed me that there is so far a probability of our losing you, that if you could obtain some appointment you have in your eye, you would accept it — and this appointment in the West Indies.' I should not have been much more surprised at hearing that Ching Wang Whang Fong Esq.r, or Mr. Chikikiqua, or any other outlandish Devil had been appointed Storekeeper General. However to be serious — though it may appear very trite advice to you my d.r Tom; weigh over every disadvantage twice, and conjure up as many of them as you can, that you may not be taken napping. The prospect ought to be a very tempting one that should induce you to take your wife and children into so questionable a Climate. You have of course not lost sight that Mrs Richards's Liver is affected: at least, so I have always understood. —

I hear also by my sister that Mrs Peche' has been so good as to invite me to a great feast in January: if I should be in London at the time, I will certainly make one of his party — but I fear it will be some time before I am in Town. Though you have for a long time I know, set me down as a bit of an epicure, if not a gourmand, yet even your opinion would hardly carry me so far in your own mind as to bring me 70 odd miles to have "a tuck out." To all who may ever speak of me friendly, present my kind regards; don't be afraid; you will have plenty of breath left to warm your fingers this cold weather. Do not suppose I say this in bitterness — I am not the only person who says sharp things in joke — am I? — In this respect ~~at any rate~~ I have ~~reason~~ to be very grateful — I have found friends, and unpretending ones too, where I least expected it; and if they are unable in the long run to benefit me; it will not be for want of inclination, or ~~dry~~ through lukewarmness. This is a noble buttress to my hopes. —